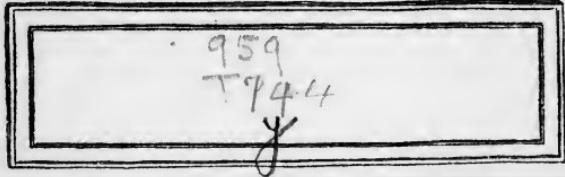
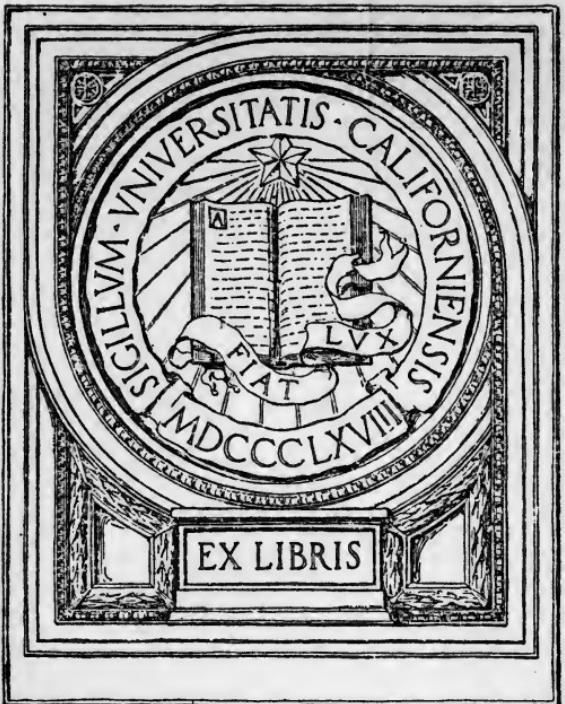


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YOUTH

And Other Poems

by

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

*author of "The Quiet Singer"
and "Manhattan"*



NEW YORK
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MCMXI

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TO MIMI
AMORALIA

*The frontispiece is from a drawing by
Thomas Fogarty*

PS 3529

*To my Friend
Richard Le Gallienne
a poor payment of many literary debts*

093

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1911

MAIN

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For the privilege of reprinting the lyrics included in this volume, the author thanks the editors of Harper's Magazine, The Forum, The Bookman, Lippincott's, Ainslee's, The Craftsman, Collier's Weekly, Harper's Bazar, The Cosmopolitan, Munsey's, Hampton's, and The Smart Set. *Youth* has not appeared elsewhere.

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YOUTH

YOUTH

I

THEIR studio was up among the stars,
And there they worked, and dreamed, and
found Life good.

The shouting City roared far, far below,
The Elevated thundered at their feet,
And the vast marts of Trade sent up faint sounds
When the loud whirlwind of the morning shook
The tired world, and brought its ancient news.

His name was Donald Kent, and he was young
With the fine strength of manhood; but a boy
Forever in his simple joyfulness;
He was an architect, and strove to make
Each simple home he reared a home indeed,
A symbol of the beauty that he knew
Should flourish in the meanest neighborhoods.
Yet there were days when he would dream his dream
Of fabled cities by a Grecian sea

YOUTH

With columns shining in the Summer sun;
He had his visions of a perfect town
That one day he would come to build for men,
Where every dome should have a meaning; each
Tall temple have a deep significance,
And every street lead to some quiet trees.
Here Beauty should be not an accident,
But the great keynote and the cornerstone,
The one inevitable, holy thing.

He thought no structure lasts that is not built
Upon the airy fabric of a dream;
And every day amid his busy life
He found some hour to rear within his heart
The fairy city that would surely rise,
Fairy no longer, but a thing of steel,
Mighty with marble, powerful with stone.

YOUTH

II

Though Donald dreamed, there were realities
Within his life that seemed too good to be;
And sometimes when the starlight pierced the glass
Above his crowded working-room, he paused
In the conception of some curious plan
To marvel at the Love that wrapped him round.

How young she was, how beautiful and good,
Lucy, his wife, who wove his days with gold
And silver threads, his nights with unguessed joys!
How sweetly at his side she often stood,
Silent, maybe, if the hushed hour was late
And he was busy at his sketching-board.
And when she waited, patient, till he turned
To press a kiss upon her lips, he knew
How much she cared for him and for his work,
And would not interrupt him in his toil
Unless she deemed it was not good for him
To drag his labor far into the night.

“Come, Donald,” she would say, her tender tone
Like a soft bell in the dim studio,

YOUTH

“This is not right, for now the moon has gone,
And I have heard the tower clock strike two.
Put by your blue-prints and those dizzy plans,
And rest with me, for it is very late.
Your brain is tired, and if you will sleep,
The morning will bring clearer thoughts, I know.”
Then she would kiss his brow, brush back his hair,
And lead him to the quiet that he loved,
The haven of her arms—that little world
Which held the ultimate meaning of all things,
And every truth that any man need learn.

Few men are ever loved as he was loved,
Or, being thus adored, can understand
The wonder of a woman’s priceless gift.
But Donald, though sometimes when he was lost
In devious hopes and fears, seemed to forget
The part that Lucy played in his young life,
Remembered always that it was to her
He owed his sure reliance in himself;
And he would tell her so, confessing all
His boyish weaknesses—his indolence,
His love for loitering in the teeming Square
When she might need him for some trivial thing;

YOUTH

His quickness to forget to send to her
The daily word when absent from her side.
And she forgave him always, though her heart
Was sometimes almost breaking for the sign
Of the affection that all women need.
Yes, always she forgave, as women will
Until the Judgment Day.

Forgiveness kills
The old-time ache, and covers up our wounds;
Forgiveness cleanses like a spiritual flame,
And hushes all the heartbreak of the world.
It is a flower that never can decay,
It is a star whose wonder never fails;
Its beauty, springing from a woman's breast,
Thrice glorifies the heart it gives release,
And makes the hour thrice sweet wherein it blooms.

YOUTH

III

Those good young days of theirs were gladly lived;
Yet who can not be happy in one's youth?
Well, add to youth ambition, health and love,
And you have quite the sum of happiness.

Donald had known that Lucy must be his
The moment that he saw her on a day
When Spring had jubilantly come to town.
He wooed her ardently, yet boyishly,
In just the manner, half dependable,
Half masterful, that every dreaming girl
Deems wonderful and perfect beyond hope.
He rushed into her heart and stormed her soul—
That citadel which had not been dismayed
By such a flaming lover. Here at last,
He told her, was the woman he must love
Now and for all eternity. She smiled. . . .
And then he poured out all his need of her,
And, to a woman, that one argument
Is worth a world of passionate appeal.

YOUTH

They wed that very Summer; and although
They were so poor in everything save Love,
Donald was certain he could make a home
Sufficient to their simple needs. His wife,
(O magic word to him!) was surer still
When bravely they talked over what the years
Might hold for them; and so, without a fear,
Together they took up their happy lives
Amid the seething City's frantic roar.
And Donald planned a little room for her
Behind the chambers where his former days
Had studiously been spent—a little room
Made all of grey birch-bark, with tiny stairs
Leading upon the building's spacious roof.
There were low lines of shelves to hold their
books—
Volumes they both had long since learned to love—
Omar and Epictetus, Shelley, Keats,
Marcus Aurelius, and R. L. S.,
Rossetti, Browning, Ruskin, and some good
Old architectural sets that Donald knew
Almost by heart; yet dearer than the rest
Was *Richard Feverel* that Lucy read
Again and still again, because somehow

YOUTH

The *Lucy* there seemed so much like herself,
And Donald like the *Richard* of that tale,
Manly and big, but always such a child.
They called the contents of their little shelves
Their “attic crumbs”; but what a feast it was
For two young mice to nibble day by day!

One stepped from out this room upon the roof,
And though the busy City hummed below
And all around, this spot seemed close to heaven,
So far removed it was from the loud voice
Of the tumultuous town. Here Quiet breathed
Her benediction at the sunset hour;
And through that first sweet Summer, Lucy served
Their golden dinners underneath the sky,
The stars and moon their lanterns; her bright
flowers
A screen to hide them from strange neighbors' eyes.

YOUTH

IV

Those were the loveliest evenings of the world!
At least, so thought young Donald and his bride,
That Summer as they loitered in the town,
While other unimaginative folk
Fled to some distant shore or crowded inn.
But Love is where you make it, Donald knew,
And though the City baked beneath the sun
Through the July and August days, the nights
Upon their roof were swept by cooling winds,
And Lucy's rows of bright geraniums
Nodded their scarlet faces in the breeze;
And often their unshielded candles blew
Suddenly out.

Then Donald used to say,
What need had they of any far-off spot,
High in the mountains or by any coast,
When here the winds of heaven were as kind,
And the same stars seemed even kinder yet.

Youth sadly learns that even honeymoons,
However happy, cannot always last;

YOUTH

And Donald found he had to earn his bread,
And seek new work, if but the common joys,
The casual blessings of their level days
Were to endure. But happily for him
Fortune was kind indeed; and he would know
His proudest moments when to Lucy's room
He rushed with face aglow, to tell the news
Of fresh important plans; and they would laugh,
Enthusiastic children that they were.
“I knew it,” she would say; “success will come
To you, my Donald—it is coming fast,
And O, how happy I am for your sake!”
Then always he would kiss her, and their eyes
Would meet in comprehension; in that bliss
That only lovers know. Then he would say,
“To-night, to celebrate, a taxicab
Shall take a certain princess for a ride!
To-night a garden restaurant I know
Shall be transfigured by her presence there.
A great repast, with sparkling Burgundy,
Shall tempt her where a tinkling fountain plays,
And a far band pours out the tunes we love.
So, will the princess wear that light lace gown

YOUTH

Her poor prince loves, and deign to come with
him?"

"Now, Donald," always Lucy's sense of thrift
Began protesting, "why do this to-night?
Such wild extravagance—such—"

"Never mind,

Dear little hermit of this city cave,
You know how futile your New England qualms
Will ever be with me! So come along,
The steedless coach is waiting at the gate,
And though we are the poorest of the poor,
I mean to give my wife a glorious time!"

Who could resist his sweet commanding? Who
Would wish to? Lucy in her heart of hearts
Said softly to herself. And so they went,
Young, radiantly young, to steal one night,
One jeweled night from Time's sealed treasury.

Y O U T H

V

There is a love that never can embrace
Friendship, the while its passion it expands;
A love that locks all others from its doors
Save the one creature of its worshipping,
The accident divine that gave it life.

There is another love that, loving much,
Would learn to love the world and friendship more,
Counting the ancient links not useless now,
But dearer, more desired than of old;
A love that of its strength would seek to aid
The weak and the forgotten; of its warmth
To kindle fires on hearths still desolate,
And cherish those that know not Love's white name.

So high a love was Donald's—Lucy's, too;
Each had a friend, and their joy could not shut
Those friends from out the circle of their bliss.
They used to talk of them incessantly,
Donald like this: “I'll send for Michael, dear;
He is alone to-night, and doubtless tired

YOUTH

With grinding out his copy for the press;
I wish he could relinquish that dull work,
And only write the things he dreams to write—
The songs that come too seldom from his pen.
I need him, Lucy. You know what I mean—
That's why I love you so. Two men can talk
Over a pipe and over a mug of beer
As man and woman never yet have talked!"

And then when Michael, their young poet, came,
His mop of tawny hair all disarranged,
Lucy would often say good-night to them,
And in the little birch-bark room sit down
And write long letters to her old schoolmate
Who lived in the far West, and tell her all
The happiness now hers, and wish that she
Might find a portion of this same great joy.
And while she wrote she might look up and read
Those lines that good old Michael sent to them
The day that she and Donald had been wed.
Yes, there it was, in his distinguished hand,
Framed simply, as his pocket could afford,
Yet worth to them more than all other gifts,
Because it was from him—their "Wedding Song."

Y O U T H

*Now a new life is yours!
New dreams, new seas, new shores
Reveal their golden gifts
To you, dear friends. Now drifts
Into your young glad days
That perfect love that slays
All base, despiséd things—
That perfect love that brings
A peace more priceless far
Than heaven's most perfect star;
That love that should outlast
Earth's mornings; love so vast
The world itself seems small—
Since you hold All in All.*

*Dear friends, I only pray
That every new white day
May hold the shining bliss
That comes to you with this; ·
That you who have learned well
Love's matchless miracle,
May be thrice good, thrice kind
To those still dumb and blind;
And if outside your gate
A lonely friend should wait,*

Y O U T H

*A beggar in the dark,
You both should pause and hark,
And give from your great light
A torch for his dim night!*

Shut Michael from their gate! So might they shut
Each other out! Their love were not the same,
If he were wholly absent from their side.
And Lucy missed him quite as much as Don
When he withdrew from their companionship,
Feeling sometimes they saw too much of him.

YOUTH

VI

Just as two lovers quarrel bitterly,
Loving each other all the painful while,
Michael and Donald craved their intimate talks,
Yet when they met, argued with highest words,
Until it seemed the rafters must fall down
At their excited scenes!

If you had heard,
As Lucy did, their passionate dialogue,
You would have said they must be enemies,
Not friends; but patient Lucy knew so well
Their deep affection, that she had no fears,
But only smiled when riotously they talked,
As if the weight of all the centuries
Were on their shoulders, and as if mankind
Must solve, through them, its deepest riddles! So
Youth deems it reads the destiny of things,
The final answer to perplexing ills,
And goes on settling questions with a word,
Dismissing Life's great problems with a smile!

But the strange thing in all their talks was this:
That one had thought the wild poetic fire

YOUTH

Would leap with more persistence. Donald, though,
Was always the aggressor, flaring up
With rumpled hair, and flushes on his cheeks,
While Michael calmly smiled and filled his pipe
And puffed away, or sipped his stein of beer,
Keeping his peace until some sudden word
Cleverly planned by Donald, stirred his blood.
Then quietly yet strongly he proclaimed
His attitude; and Donald, all aglee
At having finally brought on the storm,
Shot out the lightning of his bitter gibes,
And rolled the thunder of his mockery.

How they enjoyed these verbal tourneys!—each
When once aroused, in fine trim for the fray!
But let a third friend take, say, Donald's side
In any argument, and try to push
Poor Michael to the wall, and Don would leap
Into the other train of thought, and hurl
His sudden ally forth, surprised, perplexed!

YOUTH

VII

The Summer passed, with Michael often there
At those roof-garden feasts, a quiet guest
When he and Donald were not arguing,
Too tired sometimes from his day's iron tasks,
To be the brilliant talker; still he gave
So much in his strange, simple, boyish way,
That he was always eagerly desired;
One of those friends who need not say a word,
His presence and his silence ample joy.

The Winter came, with talks beside the fire,
And cozy dinners in the birch-bark room,
While the loud wind howled on the very roof
Where only a few months ago the sun
Beat down in Summer fury. Then Spring came
As only Spring can come to sad New York.
The joy they knew seemed greater than before,
If this could be—a joy so glorious
That Lucy sometimes wakened in the night,
A strange uneasiness within her heart,
And reached out wildly in the dark to know

YOUTH

If Donald really rested at her side.
Then she would smile at her own fear, and fall
Asleep again, still smiling in her dreams.
Too good the gods had been to her, she felt. . . .
Could the dream last, and could Life thus endure?

When ruddy, mild October brought to town
The European voyagers, and the folk
Who spent their Summers by the sea, and all
The City took its fresh, clean note again,
Lucy told Donald she would ask her friend,
Mary, who never yet had seen New York,
To come with them while Autumn's crisp, cool days
Made the streets lovely. So the word was sent,
With the young husband and his wife alert
For every post, and not content until
The answer came, and Mary blest them both,
And thanked her friend for such kind thoughts of
her.

Of course she'd come! That need not be discussed;
She'd pack her trunk and stay till Christmastime,
As Lucy had suggested. And what fun
To see the shops, the crowds, to hear the noise
That only in her dreams she yet had heard!

YOUTH

Her prairie town was lovely—but New York,
With its great theatres and its opera,
Its art museums and superb hotels,
Its Subway and its Elevated Road,
Its taxicabs and famed Fifth avenue—
Well, she could hardly wait to see them all,
And, better still, see Lucy once again!

That was a letter to make warm one's heart;
And Donald, who had never met this friend,
Was quite agog when Lucy read the note
Telling of Mary's visit.

But one thing
Disturbed him when a few more days went by,
Though to his wife he never gave a sign,
Nor once took Michael in his confidence.
There came into his eyes a far-off look,
A strange abstraction in his conduct, too,
And Lucy, ever quick to note a change
In his demeanor, asked him what it meant;
But he laughed off her fears, and went to work
With a new zeal. . . .

At this time Mary came.

Y O U T H

VIII

On their sight-seeing tramps, Donald went, too,
Saying that any draughting well could wait.
Mary's arrival caused his spirits to change,
And once again he seemed his old, wild self.
He loved to watch the prairie girl's surprise
Say, at the Hippodrome, or at the play;
And her first glimpse of Brooklyn bridge!—the joy
Was quite as great for Lucy and for Don
As for their friend. She never seemed to tire
Of looking at sky-soaring towers, there
Seeing the terrible beauty of the town—
A city wonderful for those who look,
But ugly for the blind who will not see.

Donald delighted in her reverence
For the mad buildings of a modern age,
Even as a poet rejoices in a heart
That loves the songs the noblest singers weave
For the world's added beauty.

So he told

Her many things of columns and façades,

YOUTH

The Renaissance and Florentine designs,
That made her understand more fully still
The principles that shape each climbing tower,
Each massive wall, and blazing, sun-kissed dome.

And once he told her of his own far hope—
That city he would come to build for men.
And Mary thought how good it was to know
A man who built such fancies; one who dreamed
The highest dreams, and kept his valiant faith.
Here in this mighty City things were done,
And men were rising on its seething tide
To push the world to greater glory yet.
O it was good to be a part of this,
Though but a fragment of the wondrous woof,
A thread entangled through an accident
In the whole clear design! How must it seem
To be a figure of the pattern made,
A necessary portion of the scheme!

YOUTH

IX

Always young Michael, on his holidays,
Was made the fourth in any joyful plan;
They needed him at dinner, Don would say,
Quite as they needed salt to season bread!
So Michael came, as often as might be,
Glad to play any part that suited them.

His dry, strange humor, and his curious moods,
The contrast from one evening's merriment
To the abstraction of another night,
Were just the things to interest a girl
Of Mary's worth. She never was quite sure
Of Michael Deane, and this uncertainty
Made every meeting more to be desired;
For women always like elusive men,
Whose very mystery is their strength and charm.

She liked his firm reliability;
The fact that when he said, "I shall be there,"
He meant it, and would keep his given word.
She liked his candor, and a way he had

YOUTH

Of always quietly remembering
Each trivial anniversary that came.
“Two years ago,” he’d say to Lucy, “yes,
Two years ago, Donald and you first met.
Suppose you dine with me at that French place,
And we’ll take Mary too, if she will go.”

Then at the little *table d’hôte* he’d read
A glowing rhyme occasioned by the date;
And Donald, who had meant so well to be
The first to recollect this very day,
Would feel ashamed at his remiss young ways,
And toast his wife, his friend, and in his heart
Bless the kind gods that made old Michael quick
To do the things that he himself was lax
In doing for the woman whom he loved.

YOUTH

X

Christmas brings always thoughts of carnival;
And Donald and Lucy planned, with Michael's aid,
A dance for Mary in their studio;
But not a word of this delightful scheme
Must reach her ears, they said. Surprise is half
Of joy, and all of life; and so the place
Where Donald wrought designs was cleared one day,
While Mary, all unknowing, cozy sat
With Lucy in the little birch-bark room,
Talking of nothing, and of everything;
Telling her how the City thrilled her soul,
And she must spend the whole long Winter here,
Their neighbor in a street not far away;
And meanwhile she would diligently work
At the great art school where she longed to be.

And while she told of her ambitious hopes,
Unknown to her, only two walls between,
Donald and Michael hung a room with ropes
Of holly, and prepared the studio floor
For the gay evening that they had in mind.

YOUTH

“We'll have the three musicians sit in here,”
Don said; “this little alcove's just the place.
And when the draughting-boards are moved away
I think you'll see the room's of ample size
To hold a dance—ten couples on the floor.
In every cranny we'll put sprigs of green,
And over all those metal lanterns hang
A spray of mistletoe! I want the place
To look its best, not only for Mary's sake,
But—well—of course, old man, of course I've asked
My friend from *Willow Brook* whose house I've
planned”

YOUTH

XI

The glad night came—a night of wind and snow;
And every guest that hustled to the dance
Brought in a coat powdered with silver flakes,
And ears and fingers chilled by the cold blast;
For few of these young friends were folk who rode
In carriages and motors; trolley-cars
Came nearer to the limits of each purse!
But no one minded, for the glowing fire
And Christmas punch soon warmed the fine young
blood;
And when the revel of the dance began
There was no memory of the storm without.

Lucy had never seemed so beautiful;
She wore a simple frock of white and pink,
And in her belt a cluster of violets
That matched the purple wonder of her eyes.
Always she was her best, as true folk are,
When she dispensed glad hospitality
In her own simple way, in her own home.

YOUTH

And Mary! No girl ever knew such joy
When first she came into that green-filled room,
And Donald and Lucy and Michael said at once,
“It is for you—yes, all of it—for *you!*!”
Her eyes lit up, and then were veiled with
tears . . .

These were her friends—how rich she was to-night!

The music sang the waltzes that they loved—
The true, old-fashioned waltzes; those that make
Young feet trip lighter on the polished floor.
In those old measures, and with those they loved,
How brightly sped the hours of Chrismas Eve!

Donald was his gay self; his happiness
Was that full joy a kindly host must know;
The dance was swinging to success; the punch
Was excellent; the girls were radiant;
And all the men acclaimed the fine cigars
When they retired to another room
To talk the man-talk and indulge in smoke.

But Lucy watched Don with a little fear;
She saw—as wifely eyes are quick to see—
Beneath his smiles a lurking sense of pain;
And her swift intuition knew the cause.

YOUTH

The hour had almost come when they had planned
To spread the supper in the studio,
And one chief guest was strangely unannounced.

"It is the storm—I'm sorry for Don's sake,"
Thought Lucy, as she climbed the tiny stairs
To the birch room on some brief errand; then
She heard the telephone, and hurried on
To answer the sharp tinkle of the bell.

When she rejoined the guests she touched Don's
arm,
A smile upon her lips. Quickly he turned,
And in that movement Lucy felt his nerves
Vibrate to her; his tingling energy
Flash through the fingers that had pressed his sleeve.

"It's all right, Donald. She is coming now.
I'm so glad for your sake. She telephoned . . .
The storm, you know."

She paused, for Don was white.
"You did not call me, Lucy, so that I
Might speak to her?" he asked.

"Why, Donald, no;

[37]

YOUTH

Why should I wish to take you from your guests,
When I was there to answer? . . . Come—
that waltz—
You've hardly asked your wife to dance at all!"

A half-hour later, and she came to them,
Mysteriously lovely. She it was,
In Donald's eyes, who made the night supreme;
And she it was who, in an untold way,
Filled the big studio with those ancient dreams.
Her presence was to him the dream itself.

For she had told him, in the few brief times
When they had met, of her desire to be
His helper in the distant hope he kept
Forever in his heart; she too had dreamed,
And she could see, in dimmest outlines yet,
That city he would come to build for men.

She turned to Lucy with a wondrous smile,
And kissed her.

“This, then, is the little wife
Of the wild boy who rears his castles in Spain—
And also in the country round New York!

YOUTH

I like you, dear—I like your violet eyes,
Your hair, your smile! You must be good to him,
Wild dreamer who shall realize his dream.
And when my house is done—at *Willow Brook*—
You two shall be the first guests I shall ask
To sleep beneath the roof his brain conceived."

The dance went on—with nothing quite the same;
It was as if a queen had graced a board
Where simple folk, sufficient to themselves,
Were happy till the moment when she came.
Then everything grew formal, cold, opaque,
And conversation that had lightly tripped
From casual lips, grew stiff and meaningless.

There were bright toasts at supertime to all—
To Mary first, to Don and Michael too;
And then at last the wondrous guest proposed
The deepest goblet—"to young Lucy's health!"
And each one said, "God bless her!" as he drank.

The lights were out, and the last guest had gone.
Mary was staying with the Kents to-night,
And when Don, pleading utter weariness,

YOUTH

Went to his room, the two girls sat awhile
Before the open fire. No word was said
For a long time. Then Mary, on the floor
At Lucy's feet, reached for her old friend's hand,
And pressed it in her own; yet still no word
Was spoken, and the only sound was that
Of the snow beating on the glass above,
And the sharp snapping of the dying flames.

"Lucy . . ." At last her friend's name crossed
her lips;
"Lucy, I am more happy, dear, to-night,
Than I had ever thought a girl could be.
Michael has told me that he loves me—yes,
And I have told him that I love him too!"

Here in your home the words were said that seal
My destiny; that's why I am so glad . . .
Lucy, lean down and kiss me."

Lucy brushed
The heavy hair back from the other's face,
And with a heavenly beauty in her eyes,
Leaned down and kissed her friend, and held her
there

YOUTH

Close in a trembling ecstasy of joy.
“O Mary, I am glad—so glad for you!”

How strange Life was—Mary found Love to-night,
While she stood swaying on the dizzy verge
Where her young dreams seemed falling down the
dark!

“

YOUTH

XII

It was not Lucy's nature to cry out
From the high house-tops her fast-growing grief;
Rather she hid beneath serenest smiles
Her secret sorrow through those Winter days.
Donald was always busy with his plans,
And now the joy she knew he still must feel
In greater work was never shared with her.
And yet she knew his every mood so well
That she was certain he expressed his hopes
To someone; for expression was to him
The breath of Life.

There came those ceaseless calls
To *Willow Brook*; beyond the Palisades
The bright new city would one day be built,
And there were countless schemes to be worked
out—
Plans and designs that left her quite alone
Through the long Winter evenings.

Mary was full
Of her affairs with Michael—here and there

YOUTH

On little jaunts or dinners just for two—
The happy trysts that all true lovers know.

But one cold night Michael and Mary went
To see their friends high in their birch-bark nest,
And found poor Lucy sitting there alone,
A copy of *Richard Feverel* in her hand.

“Why, where is Don?” they both exclaimed at once.
“At *Willow Brook*—as usual,” Lucy said;
“The new house must be started in the Spring,
And there is much to do.”

They said no more; *i*
But Mary always after that took pains,
Without her friend suspecting her intent,
To telephone at twilight; then if Don
Were absent still, she said that they would come,
Or else urge Lucy out to some bright place
Where music made the happy hours sing by.

YOUTH

XIII

When the first rumors started, Lucy laughed . . .
It could not be—O no! it could not be!
But secretly she wept—looked in the glass—
And kissed a glove Donald had lately worn.
She still had charms to hold him, that she knew;
They were vile tongues that so defiled his name—
Donald could never be a man so base.
Well, if it were the truth, then she would show
Her little world how worthy she could be,
Not of its sympathy or cold respect,
Its pity or its tears, but of its love.
She gave bright dinners for the very one
Whose name was linked with Donald's in those days,
And smiled as bravely as if no foul word
Had reached her ears. She was too proud to lose
With bitter sobs the love she needed so;
Always she laughed—and laughter was her sword.
And then one day when folk almost believed
That they had quite misjudged a thoughtless boy,
Lucy learned joyfully that heaven was kind,
And whispered in her husband's ears the words
That tell the happiest secret two may know.

YOUTH

XIV

Michael and Mary married in the Spring;
And while they sojourned in the distant West,
Lucy, in her new happiness, wove dreams
Of them and of her own approaching joy.
Beneath her lamp she sewed with loving hands
The little garments that so soon would fold
The child she thought of every waking hour,
And saw in every vision while she slept.
But Donald, his first jubilance gone by,
Dreamed somehow with new wonder of his work;
While Lucy thought his silence was a sign
Of his engrossed delight in what must be
Equally dear to him. And so time passed.

Lucy was never lonely now, though Don
Was absent often in the days that saw
The house at *Willow Brook* progressing fast.
She had the benison of peace with her,
She held the hope of ages in her heart;
And her long days were one long ceaseless prayer,
Filled with high thoughts too wonderful to
name . . .

YOUTH

13

XV

He leaned above his wife—above his child,
Awkward in this great moment of his life,
Not knowing how to voice his manly pride,
His young heart beating with a new delight.
To-night he reached the ultimate peaks of joy,
The summits where the soul, almost afraid,
Dares not look down upon the level road
That stretches through the valley whence it came.
How could he ever walk those ways again,
The common highroads, having found this height?
This, then, was Life, lived utterly at last,
This teeming rapture in his wakened heart,
This flood of thoughts too deep for utterance,
August and strange beyond his dreamed desire—
The splendid miracle of fatherhood.

How beautiful she looked—how pale and wise,
Wise with mysterious knowledge—his young wife,
A mother now, exalted in her hour,
Yet humble through the God-like grace she
knew . . .

He kissed her, but no word could pass his lips.

YOUTH

XVI

Their little daughter lived two golden months,
Scarce longer than the fragile silver moon,
Less than the blooms that star the meadow-grass,
Less than the time the Spring is in the world.
No one can tell why April goes away;
We simply know that sometimes all too soon
The beautiful must perish, and the lamp
Be lighted, only instantly to fail.
A breath blows down the darkness, and the spark
That lit our little ring of happiness
Goes out, and leaves us lonely in the dark.

So Mary thought that morning when she sat
Beside the tiny coffin of the child
Whose hands had clutched at life so eagerly,
And then in helplessness gone on to death.

Was this the room, this place of sorrow now,
Where only a few months ago she knew
The greatest joy a woman ever knows?
Was this the room where, at the Christmas dance,

Y O U T H

The shouts of laughter and the speeding feet
Made the walls ring and hushed the Winter winds?
Here hope was born—and swiftly died again;
Once more our poor affairs, like lantern-slides,
Moved gaily or moved sadly on the screen,
And we were weeping even while we smiled

Y O U T H

XVII

He came to her one evening, tired and worn;
And Lucy, having lost the child she loved,
Drew this great child to her, and stroked his hair—
Defeated motherhood triumphant now.

But neither spoke. She knew this time would come,
This hour when his large need of her would break
All barriers down. Their mutual joy had been
Not strong enough to mend the severed threads,
But in the instant of their common pain
He learned that he loved Lucy more than life,
More than the dream that was a shadow now.

“Lucy,” he said, “can you forgive me, dear?
I have no right to ask, no right, I know,
For I have forfeited all claims with you;
And yet, that old compassion in your eyes
Still makes me brave to come to you to-night.
Can you forgive me, Lucy, knowing all?”

YOUTH

She stroked his hair in the old tender way.
“Donald, I can forgive you—knowing all.
I am the *Lucy* of a certain tale
We both have loved—and you are *Richard* now.
Do you remember how, one solemn night,
He came to her, confessing all his fault?
‘Do you remember . . . ?’

“Lucy! Lucy, my wife!”

Donald cried out, and hid his shameful head
Between his hands. “O you are wonderful,
Too wonderful to me! I cannot hope
Ever again to be quite worthy of you.
You, knowing all, say this?”

“Yes, knowing all,
Dear Donald, for you knew not what you did.
If you had ceased to love me, I had known.
You loved your dream—and she was part of it;
But always, though you never told me so,
I knew you loved me still; and in that hour
When our child died I knew you loved me more.

You left me for your dream”

“I followed it
All, all for you, and if it had come true—

YOUTH

If I had built that city that I loved—
You should have been the empress of its walls,
You should have been”

“I know what you would say;
But Donald, I would rather be your wife,
Here in this little birch-bark room than there,
A lonely queen high on a city hill!
I want but you—you and a child again;
I want the old-time lover—that is all.”

“And I want you, O Lucy, my young wife!”—
The tears were streaming from his blinded eyes—
“I want you more than dreams of glittering towers
In that new city which my fancy built.
I shall conceive a city of content
For you alone, and me; and heaven may send
Us other children for the one we lost
To make our dwelling perfect. Better far
The firm reality than some remote
Pale wonder set upon the windy heights.
O Lucy, let me build your days for you,
Full of wide windows looking to the light,
Full of great corridors which we may tread
Untroubled by the clamor of the world.

YOUTH

And I shall build one sumptuous place for
you . . .”

“Like this,” she said, and laughingly gazed round
The little birch-bark room. “This is enough,
With you, my Donald! . . . Listen! what is
that?

Michael and Mary are coming up the stairs!”

SHELLEY'S SKYLARK

IMMORTAL bird,

Whose song God's purest poet long since heard,
And caught within the golden chains of rhyme,
Our captive for all time!

O tender tones,

That none who, hearing, ever can forget,
Even when the city's thunder crashes and groans,
And the wood's whisper moans—
How wonderful that thou art with us yet!

High on the Hills of Song thy song is set,
Within the very blue where first thy voice
Made his young heart rejoice;
And from empyrean heights forever shall fall
Thy silver madrigal,
Drenching the world with thine enraptured stream,
Thy heavenly dream,
Cleansing us as in fires angelical,

A SONG IN APRIL

SUN!—and the rush of the rain
Swift through the lilac lane;
The joy o' the world and the grief o' the world
Beat at my window-pane.

Love!—and the ancient tears;
Hope!—and a hundred fears.
The light o' the world and the dark o' the world,
They follow us down the years.

KNOWLEDGE

SO many Aprils went away
Before I learned one little part
Of all the joy each fragile day
Hid in its heart.

So many Summers hastened by
Before I caught their secret spell,
And read in bloom and leaf and sky
Life's miracle.

Would that Youth's eye could see the grace
And wonder of the drifting years . . .
Grown old, their loveliness we trace
Through blinding tears.

SLOW PARTING

THERE was no certain hour
Wherein we said good-bye;
But day by day, and year by year
We parted—you and I;
And ever as we met, each felt
The shadow of a lie.

It would have been too hard
To say a swift farewell;
You could not goad your tongue to name
The words that rang my knell;
But better that quick death than this
Glad heaven and mad hell!

OF A FRIEND WHO DIED IN THE
SPRING

(M. J. F.)

SHE who was like a flower,
 Why should she go away
When all the world was jubilant
 With hawthorn-bloom and May?

I cannot think of her as one
 Who sleeps the Sleep profound,
For her light laughter mocked our tears—
 Hushed now that golden sound.

Once more the lark ascends the sky
 To utter his glad song;
To-day the Spring's old miracle
 Reviles the ancient wrong.

And she—I think I see her face
 In every starry bloom,
And hear her laughter when the breeze
 Sings through the Earth's great room.



SMOKE

I HAVE watched the smoke ascending from the
work-shops of the world,
Blowing in an endless spiral as it soared,
Till it seemed to reach high heaven when it valiantly
upcurled—
Labor's incense (whispered Mammon) to the
Lord.

*But I saw, as in a vision, the wan profiles of the
poor
In the outline of the smoke against the sky;
And I saw their anguished bodies that no longer
could endure,
Sweeping upward—and I thought I heard them
sigh.*

Yet the mighty lords of labor, they who prosper in
the sun
While the darkness of the engine-room is deep,
Tell us this is their grey tribute for another day's
work done,
This the token of *their* thanks before they sleep.

S M O K E

But I know it is the breath of them who labor in the mills,

*I know it is a portion of each soul
Who has known the stifling, chained-up years, the
grind that slowly kills,*

As I watch the velvet columns upward roll.

Thick and thicker swings the whirlwind up the ladder of the night,

Dense and denser sweeps the twilight's punctual cloud;

If this be Toil's great censer swung with Wealth's tumultuous might,

Then with shame, O Lord, with shame my head is bowed.

*For Thy children in our keeping lose a little by day,
Thin and thinner toward high heaven blows their breath,*

*And I know that from the chimneys that are black
and tall and grey,*

Each sunset moves an army unto Death!

THE DAYS REBUKED ME

THE days rebuked me, saying: "Honor and
praise,
Wisdom and high endeavor, fame and peace
Are in our keeping as the dawns increase;
Not fame alone, but fame's immortal bays
We hold, and all thy youth's great strength, which
slays

Fear and her cohorts when they seek release.
What hast thou done to gain even one of these,
O young, wild heart?" Thus spake the patient days.

I heard their voices in the dusk and dawn;
I listened, and my soul, a coward, wept,
Then put Youth's mighty armor bravely on,
And from the Camps of Quiet proudly swept.
I fought with Life, I knew the pain that sears . . .
The days rebuked me—days that soon are years!

WHEN A GREAT MAN DIES

THE flags are hung half-mast to-day,
But they'll all be high to-morrow!
This is the big world's cruel way,
Ah! this is how we sorrow!

A moment's grief, a brief delay
From plough and field and furrow—
The flags are hung half-mast to-day,
But they'll all be high to-morrow!

We mourn one hour, we pause to pray,
(Sad prayers that we must borrow!)
One little while we softly say
Poor words of pain and sorrow;
The flags are hung half-mast to-day,
But they'll all be high to-morrow!

THREADS OF SONG

GOD made a wondrous tapestry,
And called it Life. To you and me

He gave the coarse, dark threads to spin,
The common fabric, out and in

To weave by day and in the night,
In sorrow and in candlelight.

But in one sunlit, glowing room,
Untouched of terror or of gloom,

He placed, to do their labor long,
His glad, imperial Lords of Song.

And they the golden threads are given
To weave in fancy up to heaven.

O, theirs the pure, exalted hours,
Whose shuttles spin such deathless flowers;

But vain their toil miraculous,
Without the background made by us!

AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER

I SAW the abundant beauty of the world
One full day hurled
In bank on bank of crimson and of gold;
It was as if Life's rosary had been told,
And no more prayers
And no more cares
Need follow us beyond those gates empearled
That opened in the sky when twilight came
With wonderful red flame.

All beauty fainted in the purple dusk,
And lay quite still
Upon each towering hill,
Lay in the arms of evening like a child
After the Summer, wild
With hum and joy and madness and delight.
There was no word to say;
It seemed to me the day
With tasseled corn already in the husk,

THE END OF SEPTEMBER

And with its horn of plenty, the young moon,
Wished only now to swoon
Into the darkness, ere there came one sound
To break the spell that wrapped her sweetly round.

This was the hour of utter beauty; this
The royal moment when the Year fulfilled
Her marvellous slow march. Such bliss
Must have been known by those
Who went where no one knows,
Seeking a matchless prize
Where only danger rose—
Pale pilgrims with a strength that could not fail,
In their long journey for the Holy Grail.

A WOMAN'S PARTING

I HAVE forgotten you! Wherefore my days
Run gladly, as in those white hours gone by
Before I learned to love you. Now have I
Returned to that old freedom, where the rays
Of your strange wonder no more shall amaze
My spirit. How remote the rich hours lie
Wherein our hearts were one! Eternity
Is not so distant to my youthful gaze.

I have forgotten—yea, and more than this,
I nevermore shall need you at my side;
New love, new days, new friends shall swiftly
glide
Into my life, to bring my heart new bliss.
(Hush! On my lips I feel a ghost-like kiss.)
I have forgotten? . . . O, I lied, I lied!

SONG

A DEAD girl stirred beneath the grass,
And lo! a blossom blew;
And we who watched the Spring's old joy
A double wonder knew . . .
Flowers are the voices of the dead
Calling to me and you.

O living language, fragrant still,
Though Winter hushed your sound,
How magical your old words seem
As the glad years wheel round!
If from our lips such perfume flows,
Who fears the quiet ground?

BONDAGE

THE poet is a prisoner for all time;
But, captive in the shining House of Song,
Life, Love and Sorrow round about him throng,
And sweet are his enchanted chains of rhyme!

TRIUMPHANT

I LOVE that face the best,
That, lined and seared and scarred
After the journey hard,
Shows in each token of life's awful test
A sign of victory from the fields of pain;
Tracings that prove it braved the stinging rain
Undaunted, undismayed,
Valiantly unafraid,
Glad of its grief, yet glad now of its rest.
I love that face the best.

IN THE YEAR'S DUSK

LET me be glad
These Autumn days are sad,
Lest I, too long familiar with the May,
Forget, in darkness, how to find my way.

Let me rejoice
To hear the lone wind's voice,
So that, when breaks again the April song,
This heedless heart of mine shall listen long.

LOVE'S RITUAL

BREATHE me the ancient words when I shall find
Your spirit mine; if, seeking you, life wins
New wonder, with old splendor let us bind
Our hearts when Love's high sacrament begins.

Exalt my soul with pomp and pageantry,
Sing the eternal songs all lovers sing;
Yea, when you come, gold let our vestments be,
And lamps of silver let us softly swing.

But if at last, (hark how I whisper, Love!)
You from my temple and from me should turn,
I pray you chant no psalm my grief above,
Over the body of Pain let no light burn.

Go forth in silence, quiet as a dove,
Drift, with no sign, from our exultant place;
We need no *Ite* at the death of Love,
And none should come to look on Love's white
face.

SLEEP

SLEEP seals our tired eyes,
And heals our burning ills;
How swift the spirit flies
To her deep-bosomed hills!

Sleep gives—O gift supreme!—
Silence that sings, “Forget!”
Or happily a dream—
Remembrance dearer yet.

OF DEATH

(To Michael Monahan)

WHY should I fear that ultimate thing—
The Great Release of clown and king?

Why should I dread to take my way
Through the same shadowed path as they?

But can it be a shadowy road
Whereon both Youth and Genius strode?

Can it be dark, since Shakespeare trod
Its unknown length, to meet our God;

Since Shelley, with his valiant youth,
Fared forth to learn the final Truth;

Since Milton in his blindness went
With wisdom and a high content;

And Angelo lit with white flame
The pathway when God called his name;

O F D E A T H

And Dante, seeking Beatrice,
Marched fearless down the deep abyss?

Where Plutarch went, and Socrates,
Browning and Keats, and such as these,

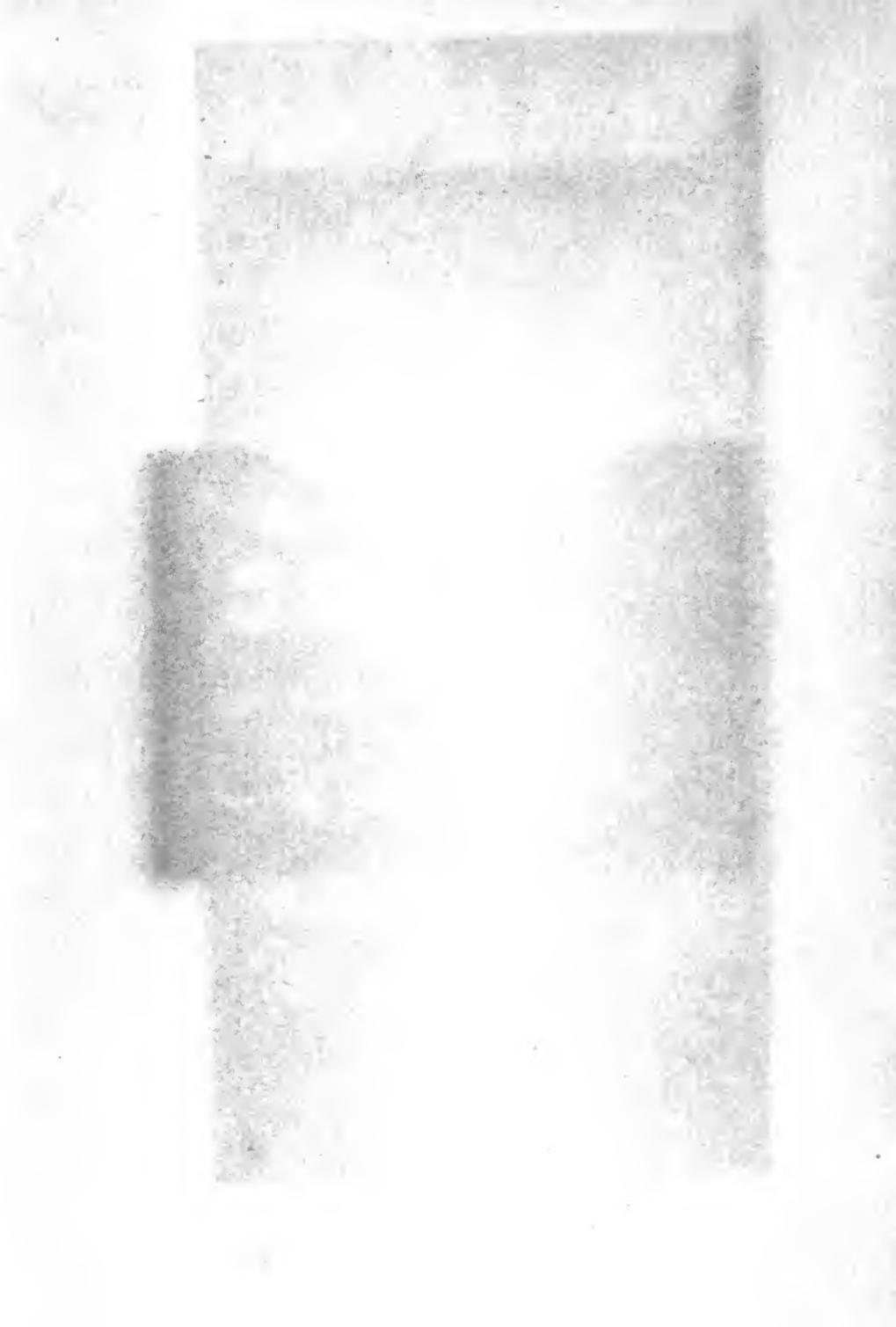
Homer, and Sappho with her song
That echoes still for the vast throng;

Lincoln and strong Napoleon,
And calm, courageous Washington;

Great Alexander, Nero—names
That swept the world with deathless flames—

I need not fear that I shall fall
When the Lord God's great Voice shall call;

For I shall find the roadway bright
When I go forth some quiet night.



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